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Realization of internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities and progress made in the implementation of the outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 69/142, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General, in coordination with all relevant United Nations entities, to submit to it at its seventy-first session information on the implementation of the resolution and of the outcome document of the high-level meeting of the Assembly on the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities.

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The present report reviews the extent to which recently adopted international development frameworks, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda) (General Assembly resolution 69/313, annex) and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (Assembly resolution 69/283, annex II), address and include the rights, well-being and perspectives of persons with disabilities. It also presents recent initiatives to include disability in development processes, based on the information contributed by Governments, the United Nations system, civil society organizations and, in particular, organizations of persons with disabilities, as well as other information available to the Secretariat. The report presents many positive initiatives in this regard, while noting that the international community is still at the beginning of action towards achieving internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities. In the case of the Sustainable Development Goals, accelerated progress for persons with disabilities would require ensuring the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of development processes by ensuring accessibility, securing sound data and evidence and addressing inequality by implementing an integrated approach to policymaking for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society and development. The report concludes with recommendations for the next steps for strengthening efforts in these areas.

I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 69/142, expressed concern that persons with disabilities continued to be largely invisible in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals. The Assembly noted that, while progress had been made in mainstreaming disability as an integral part of the development agenda, major challenges remained. It also reaffirmed the outcome document of the high-level meeting of the Assembly on the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities and recognized the continued need to give consideration to the issue of the rights of persons with disabilities in the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda. The Assembly also encouraged Member States, the United Nations system and other stakeholders to further improve coordination to advance a disability-inclusive global agenda. The Assembly also urged Member States, United Nations agencies, international and regional organizations and other members of the international community to make a concerted effort to integrate the principles of accessibility and inclusion into the monitoring and evaluation of the development goals.

2. In the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, in coordination with all relevant United Nations entities, to submit to it at its seventy-first session information on the implementation of the resolution and of the outcome document of the high-level meeting of the Assembly on the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities. The present report: (a) provides an overview of ongoing efforts to mainstream the rights, well-being and perspectives of persons with disabilities in development; (b) reviews the extent to which recently adopted international development frameworks have addressed and included the rights, well-being and perspectives of persons with disabilities; (c) summarizes the ongoing efforts by Member States and the United Nations system in this regard, including recent examples of disability-responsive development policies and programmes; and (d) describes the progress made in the work of civil society organizations to better respond to the rights and perspectives of persons with disabilities. In conclusion, the report addresses persistent gaps between policy and practice and provides recommendations to support the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, which are centred on the Sustainable Development Goals, for persons with disabilities.

II. Current status of disability inclusion in international development frameworks

3. Disability has been increasingly recognized as a cross-cutting development issue in global agendas. Contrary to the Millennium Development Goals (General Assembly resolution 55/2), which do not include references to persons with disabilities, recent international development frameworks incorporate the rights and perspectives of persons with disabilities. This represents a major breakthrough and demonstrates the strong political commitment of the international community to disability-inclusive development, following the 2013 high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities. The

high-level meeting called on the international community to seize every opportunity to include disability as a cross-cutting issue in the global development agenda and to give due consideration to disability in the then emerging 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Assembly resolution 68/3).

4. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1) is a plan of action for the people, the planet and prosperity that recognizes that eradicating poverty, in all its forms and dimensions, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. The Sustainable Development Goals explicitly include issues concerning persons with disabilities in seven of their targets. These targets address access to education and employment, availability of schools sensitive and responsive to students with disabilities, inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities, accessible transport, accessible public and green spaces and building capacity of countries to disaggregate data by disability. Moreover, the Agenda establishes a commitment to providing persons with disabilities with access to lifelong learning opportunities that will help them to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to exploit opportunities and to participate fully in society. The Agenda also establishes that the follow-up and review processes at the national, regional and global levels should be guided by data that are disaggregated by disability.

5. The global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals was agreed on by the Statistical Commission at its forty-seventh session (E/2016/24). The framework includes 11 indicators that refer explicitly to disability. These indicators focus on social protection coverage for persons with disabilities, disparities in education between persons with and without disabilities, schools with adapted infrastructure and materials for students with disabilities, earnings by employed persons with disabilities, persons with disabilities living below 50 per cent of median income, access to convenient public transport by persons with disabilities, public open spaces for use by persons with disabilities, victims with disabilities of physical and sexual harassment, positions in public institutions occupied by persons with disabilities and assessments by persons with disabilities on whether decision-making is inclusive.

6. In the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda) (General Assembly resolution 69/313, annex), Member States also committed themselves to: providing social protection to persons with disabilities; encouraging the full participation of persons with disabilities in the labour market; delivering quality education to all by reaching children with disabilities; upgrading education facilities that are disability-sensitive; facilitating accessible technology for persons with disabilities; and using data disaggregated by disability. The Action Agenda also urges developed countries to step up efforts to increase their official development assistance (ODA) and to make additional concrete efforts towards achieving the ODA targets. ODA, if properly directed, can drive inclusive development and better facilitate access for persons with disabilities to education, employment, social protection and information and communications technology. The Action Agenda also encourages Member States and the business sector to work in partnership with regional and national organizations. If disability organizations are included, the needs of persons with disabilities can be better addressed in financing for development.

7. The Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Sendai, Japan, in March 2015, adopted the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (Assembly resolution 69/283, annex II), which recognizes persons with disabilities as a group whose active participation, involvement and contribution of expertise in disaster preparedness optimize resilience and survival of persons with disabilities. The Framework also sets out principles of universal design and accessibility in all aspects of disaster risk mitigation and preparedness and calls for universally accessible responses.

8. A disability caucus comprised of a group of Member States, United Nations entities and organizations of persons with disabilities was established to support and guide the integration of a disability perspective in the planning and preparatory processes leading to the Sendai Conference. The impact of the caucus in strengthening understanding of disability-inclusive strategies is observed in the repeated references to disability in the Sendai Framework, which mark a significant improvement on the preceding global framework guiding disaster risk reduction.[1] The Sendai Framework represents a milestone not only for advancing disability inclusion in the framework for disaster risk reduction, but for also gaining explicit recognition of the role of persons with disabilities as agents of change, whose active engagement in disaster planning and responses directly benefit not only themselves, but also other groups, and ultimately saves lives.

9. The Sendai Conference also enabled the active participation of persons with disabilities through the provision of a range of accessibility features. Over 200 persons with disabilities attended and contributed to the Conference in various capacities. This signifies a substantial improvement for disability inclusion and should set a precedent for future global conferences.

10. The first World Humanitarian Summit, which was held in Istanbul, Turkey, in May 2016, increased further the visibility of persons with disabilities in situations of crisis and emphasized the need to find durable and inclusive solutions. The special session of the Summit on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action and the multi-stakeholder endorsement of the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action underscore the international commitment to integrate the rights and perspectives of persons with disabilities in all aspects and stages of humanitarian responses. Multi-stakeholders at the Summit also called for strengthened cooperation and coordination among humanitarian and development actors to improve the inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian responses, risk-informed development practices and in transitions towards recovery and reconstruction. As noted in the Chair's summary, commitments made at the Summit to the Charter and its implementation will play a critical role in achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the Sendai Framework and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda for persons with disabilities.

11. As the global community prepares for the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Development (Habitat III), to be held in Quito from 17 to 20 October 2016, and the adoption of the New Urban Agenda, to guide global urban development for the next two decades, it is encouraging to note that the preparatory processes are taking into account the urgent need for urban policy, regulatory norms and standards to be informed by principles of universal design and accessibility for

[1] See Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters (A/CONF.206/6 and Corr.1, chap. I, resolution 2).

all.[2] The achievement of truly inclusive development in urban spaces, where no one is left behind, requires a holistic approach, with people at its centre.

12. The multi-stakeholder Forum on Disability Inclusion and Accessible Urban Development was organized jointly by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in Nairobi in October 2015, in conjunction with World Cities Day, to review opportunities to advance sustainable and inclusive urban development. The Forum was held as a contribution to the processes leading to Habitat III. As underscored in the Forum outcome, accessibility is a collective good that benefits all. The Forum also recommended that future frameworks that guide urban development should consider accessibility as a key component of good policy and facilitate the full and effective participation of all in pursuit of inclusive and sustainable development in alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 11. It is imperative that the New Urban Agenda builds on recent successes of embedding the rights and perspectives of persons with disabilities in international development frameworks.

13. This recent progress indicates that the rights and perspectives of persons with disabilities are increasingly becoming an integral part of international development frameworks. As called for in the high-level meeting, recognition of persons with disabilities as both beneficiaries and agents of change, and their active participation in all stages of policy formulation and implementation are now clearly reflected in mainstream development processes. Section III of the present report includes examples of measures taken and progress achieved in the follow-up to the implementation of the outcome of the high-level meeting.

III. Measures taken and progress achieved in the follow-up to the implementation of the outcome of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities

14. The high-level meeting was instrumental in guiding inclusive development efforts and securing commitment to mainstreaming disability. As part of the follow-up, a multi-stakeholder panel discussion was organized in June 2016 by the President of the General Assembly to review progress made towards the realization of development goals for persons with disabilities. The panel reviewed existing institutional frameworks to mainstream a rights-based approach to disability in development efforts at the international, national and local levels and assessed current progress towards the operationalization of the 2030 Agenda for persons with disabilities.

15. The panel underlined the importance of institutionalizing the inclusion of the rights, perspectives and well-being of persons with disabilities in policy development at all levels and emphasized this process should involve active and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities. The role of data and, in particular, disability-disaggregated data in measuring progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and informing decision-making and programme

[2] See https://www.habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda.

formulation was also discussed; it was noted that responsive and effective policies depended on the existence of reliable data on all groups, including persons with disabilities. The panel reiterated the role of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as a guiding tool for international cooperation and national efforts to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

16. In response to a note verbale dated 6 April 2016 from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, 12 Member States,[3] 9 entities of the United Nations system[4] and 5 civil society organizations[5] provided information on progress made towards the realization of internationally agreed development goals. The responses also provided specific recommendations for action to be taken to implement a disability-inclusive 2030 Agenda.

A. Member States

17. The present subsection highlights examples of recent efforts to mainstream disability in development processes reported by Member States in response to the above-mentioned note verbale.

National action plans and programmes

18. National action plans to promote equal opportunities for persons with disabilities have continued to be key instruments used to guide and strengthen inclusive society and development. Australia, for instance, has continued to implement its National Disability Strategy 2010-2020, to ensure a more inclusive approach to the design of policies, programmes and infrastructure. Georgia has reported joint planning with non-governmental organizations and organizations of persons with disabilities for a national action plan; and Swaziland is finalizing a national disability plan of action.

Accessibility

19. Accessibility, including improving access to services, facilities and the built environment, is a key priority of many Member States. Poland has reported efforts to improve accessibility through the promotion of universal design in built environments and information technology and has issued a new digital agenda ensuring equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. Georgia has adopted an ordinance on adaption of space and design for persons with disabilities. Universal access to all public health interventions is being promoted in Swaziland, while China has conducted extensive construction and renovation to improve accessibility in 1,618 cities, towns and districts, benefiting 147,000 low-income households of

[3] Argentina, Australia, Bulgaria, Chile, China, Denmark, Georgia, Panama, Peru, Poland, Sierra Leone and Swaziland.

[4] The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations Mine Action Service, the United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Intellectual Property Organization.

[5] Disabled People's International, the International Disability Alliance, the International Disability and Development Consortium, the Nippon Foundation and the Zero Project.

persons with disabilities. Chile has issued a decree regulating standards for the built environment, which incorporates principles of universal design and establishes deadlines for accessibility modifications to existing buildings. Peru has strengthened accessibility to voting through the use of accessible polling documentation and by improving accessibility at voting stations.

Employment

20. Significant efforts continue to be made to strengthen training and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. In Australia, the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 provides for improvements in learning and skills, and well as economic security. China has reported on activities to promote the employment of persons with disabilities in the public service through self-employment programmes. Programmes for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market through training, technical assistance and self-employment have also been implemented in Argentina. Peru has reported increases in the number of persons with disabilities who had received technical training and entered the labour market.

Inclusive approaches to disaster risk reduction and humanitarian responses

21. Inclusive disaster risk reduction and humanitarian responses have been strengthened by a number of Member States. Chile has established a disability-responsive national platform for disaster risk reduction, and Panama has incorporated disability in disaster risk management awareness campaigns and protocols. Sierra Leone reported increased efforts to strengthen the resilience of disabled persons during humanitarian crises, through the provision of welfare services and awareness-raising. Australia reported on advocacy efforts in the organization of the special session on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action at the World Humanitarian Summit.

Social protection and social services

22. Strategies to guarantee social protection and improve social services for persons with disabilities have been reported by a number of countries. Support for personal and care services to persons with disabilities are being provided in Denmark to its 98 municipalities and 5 regions. Bulgaria reported the provision of free social services for children with disabilities. Bulgaria, Denmark and Georgia have strengthened their social services for persons with permanent mental or physical disabilities. Bulgaria also reported on the positive impact of social services on improving the quality of life and preventing institutionalization of persons with disabilities. Georgia also reported on efforts to improve psychosocial conditions and integration into society of persons with disabilities through the provision of a range of residential, community and family-tailored social services.

Monitoring mechanisms

23. National mechanisms to monitor and strengthen the impact of policies and programmes on the lives of persons with disabilities have been receiving greater attention in a number of countries. Denmark, for instance, reported on the creation of a number of measures, including the election of an ombudsman and the designation of an independent institute for human rights to monitor the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In

Sierra Leone, a special needs working group has been created within the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to identify challenges to inclusive education. Bulgaria has established as an advisory board a national council for the integration of persons with disabilities. In Chile, a secretariat for disabilities has been created within the Ministry of Social Development.

Data and statistics

24. Efforts to strengthen national knowledge bases in the area of disability data and to collect data disaggregated by disability have been reported by a number of Member States. Denmark is employing a new strategy to collect and analyse data on target groups and to evaluate support services. Australia continues to implement its Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers. In Panama, the national system for statistics on disabled people has provided a platform for integrated information on groups of persons with disabilities to facilitate policy evaluation.

B. United Nations system

25. Collaboration and coordination within the United Nations system to advance the rights and perspectives of persons with disabilities continue to grow and be strengthened through existing mechanisms, particularly the Inter-Agency Support Group on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities[6] and the United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.[7] With the recent adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, coordination among United Nations entities to support Member States in the operationalization of the 2030 Agenda for persons with disabilities is already taking place.

26. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the focal point on disability for the United Nations system, is leading in supporting the operationalization of the 2030 Agenda for persons with disabilities and has conducted a number of activities to advance disability-inclusive implementation. The Department, on behalf of the Inter-Agency Support Group, has contributed to the work of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators with technical advice on indicators to measure progress and inform policymaking for persons with disabilities under the Sustainable Development Goals and has continued to support intergovernmental processes to review and discuss mechanisms to monitor progress in the achievement of the Goals for persons with disabilities. The Department has prompted multi-stakeholder dialogues by hosting consultations, forums and expert meetings and has produced a publication on the status of disability in development. In the processes leading to Habitat III, the Department, together with UN-Habitat, is strengthening recognition of the importance of accessible and disability-inclusive urbanization through the organization of multi-stakeholder forums, consultations and public outreach.

[6] The Inter-Agency Support Group has expanded its membership over the past two years to include the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. It has also established a number of sub-working groups to support implementation of articles 6 and 11 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

[7] The United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has expanded its membership and revised its Strategic and Operational Framework to build on the experiences of its first phase of implementation.

27. Significant action has also been taken by United Nations entities to advance disability inclusion in crisis situations. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs, together with the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and a multi-stakeholder caucus, has contributed to greater understanding of challenges faced by persons with disabilities in all aspects of disaster risk reduction and response policies, programmes and processes in the lead-up to the Sendai Conference. In 2015, the Inter-Agency Support Group on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has established a sub-working group to strengthen the rights and perspectives of persons with disabilities in emergency and humanitarian crises. The activities of the Inter-Agency Support Group include the provision of substantive and organizational support to advance disability inclusion in the World Humanitarian Summit. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has strengthened its programmes by promoting accessibility and inclusive responses to refugees with disabilities, while the United Nations Mine Action Service has continued to provide assistance to survivors and victims of explosive devices.

28. The regional commissions have continued to provide technical support to Member States to assist them in their efforts to implement policies and programmes to advance the rights of persons with disabilities. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has strengthened institutional capacities in Arab States, bringing together representatives from Governments, civil society and the United Nations system to discuss strategies to strengthen national mechanisms, including the development of monitoring indicators. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and ESCWA have published papers on disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction and, in collaboration with civil society and the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), are developing an interactive e-learning tool for effective disability-inclusive disaster preparedness. ESCAP has also trained 16 Member States on the accessibility of built environments and services and launched an accessibility centre at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok.

29. Accessibility has also been a focus of ITU, which has continued to promote the development of policies favouring accessible information and communications technology through capacity-building and awareness-raising activities. The World Intellectual Property Organization has continued to support, through the Accessible Books Consortium, the implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled. UN-Habitat, in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, has developed technical guidance and tools for Member States to promote a human rights-based approach to accessible housing and inclusive urban spaces.

30. In the area of gender equality, the Inter-Agency Support Group on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has established a sub-working group on women and girls with disabilities. The working group, led by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), has organized a number of activities and consultations to address cross-sectionalities of gender and disability and to advance the situation of women and girls with disabilities and their representative organizations. UN-Women has also continued to provide technical assistance to Member States for the economic empowerment and leadership of women and girls with disabilities.

31. The United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has completed all joint United Nations agency projects in round one, reporting significant results. In addition to country-level projects, it is supporting regional initiatives, including the establishment of the African Disability Forum, to unify and amplify the voices of persons with disabilities in Africa, and the "Pacific Enable" project, to improve the lives of persons with disabilities in the Pacific islands.

32. The World Health Organization (WHO) has launched the Global Disability Action Plan 2014-2021 to improve health outcomes for all persons with disabilities. WHO continues to focus efforts on strengthening disability-disaggregated data, removing barriers to health services, improving access to support and assistance services, and community-based rehabilitation.

C. Civil society organizations

33. Significant progress has been made by civil society organizations, including organizations of persons with disabilities to be involved in decision-making processes at the national and international levels. For example, notable progress was made in ensuring the active participation of such persons in the processes leading to the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, held in New York in September 2015. Practical documents providing guidance on the engagement of persons with disabilities have been developed by civil society organizations. Training programmes promoting accessibility have been delivered worldwide by the International Disability Alliance and the International Disability and Development Consortium to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for persons with disabilities.

34. Progress has also been made in terms of expanding the scope of work to better respond to the rights and perspectives of persons with disabilities. Civil society organizations are increasingly engaging in disability issues and are strengthening the mainstreaming of disability. Meanwhile, organizations of persons with disabilities are increasingly engaging in the analysis of disability data, recognizing the urgent need to support evidence-based decision-making. For example, one organization, Sightsavers, has developed guidance notes to identify good practices and approaches to use in collecting and analysing disability-disaggregated data at the community level; and Atlas Alliance has continued to conduct training for disability inclusion in data collection. Disabled People's International is calling for a disability data revolution for effective research on the situation of persons with disabilities in development.

35. Organizations such as the World Federation of the Deaf have continued to increase the accessibility of information through sign language and multimedia formats. Other organizations, such as Royal Dutch Kentalis, have continued to advance the inclusive education of children with disabilities. The Zero Project reported on efforts made in a number of countries to improve access to transportation, built environments and education for persons with disabilities.

IV. Progress, challenges and opportunities in disability-inclusive development

36. Notable progress has been made in the integration of the rights, well-being and perspectives of persons with disabilities in national development policies and

programmes; however, significant barriers to such inclusion remain in a number of areas. The present section reviews the progress made and discusses some persistent challenges to mainstreaming disability, as well as some options to accelerate the inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities to implement a truly inclusive 2030 Agenda.

A. Assessing progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and targets for persons with disabilities

37. The Sustainable Development Goals and targets are part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is built on the principle of leaving no one behind and including persons with disabilities. As discussed above, several targets of the Sustainable Development Goals explicitly address the needs of persons with disabilities and sustainable development indicators have been agreed upon to monitor progress for persons with disabilities with regard to selected targets. Now that this development framework has been established, the Agenda needs to be translated into implementation. To achieve this, it will be crucial to measure and assess progress made towards the realization of targets of the Sustainable Development Goals for persons with disabilities. However, such an endeavour has never been conducted at the global level for persons with disabilities. Without a precedent to serve as a model, strategies will have to be identified to effectively measure and assess progress towards Sustainable Development Goals and targets for persons with disabilities.

38. With this in mind, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and ESCWA have undertaken a number of activities to advance the operationalization of the 2030 Agenda. In the Expert Group Meeting on Disability and Development: Operationalizing the Post-2015 Development Agenda for Persons with Disabilities, held in Beirut in May 2015, experts provided recommendations on the monitoring and evaluation of progress made towards targets for persons with disabilities in the context of the new development agenda. At the commemoration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December 2015, a panel discussion was organized on operationalizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with regard to disability data, statistics and indicators for persons with disabilities.[8]

39. Operationalizing the 2030 Agenda from a disability perspective will require effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track progress and facilitate policymaking, including a list of indicators, established data production and an evidence-based analysis of policies and programmes. It will require a two-track approach: (a) mainstreaming disability in all processes related to the follow-up and review of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets; and (b) establishing follow-up and review processes focusing on issues concerning persons with disabilities. It is essential that data on disability are improved and collected regularly to monitor and assess progress and the situation of persons with disabilities in the context of the Goals. Proper impact evaluation studies will also be needed to assess which policies better promote disability inclusion and progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals for persons with disabilities.

[8] On the basis of the recommendations from experts at these two events, a technical note entitled "Operationalizing the 2030 agenda: ways forward to improve monitoring and evaluation of disability inclusion" was released in December 2015 (www.un.org/disabilities/documents/desa/operationalizing_2030_agenda.pdf).

40. Shortcomings in the availability of consistent and reliable data have been an ongoing challenge in the area of disability and development. Disability data remain scarce and are often of poor quality in many countries, particularly in developing countries. Internationally comparable data are currently insufficient to provide a global picture of the situation of persons with disabilities in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals. Therefore, it is currently not possible to determine the global baseline against which progress from 2015 onwards can be compared. Countries, with the support of the international community, should make efforts to establish this baseline as early as possible, by launching the necessary data production activities and using existing international recommendations and guidelines for collecting data on disability. The number of countries using the United Nations recommendations for collecting disability data in censuses has been increasing and thus more internationally comparable data are available today.[9] However, many countries are still using different methodologies.

41. At the international level, disability data are not currently being compiled in a systematic way. This makes it difficult to know what data exist and where the gaps are for monitoring progress towards the 2030 Agenda. The Statistics Division of the Secretariat has begun activities to undertake another round of collecting statistics for updating the international database on disability statistics. This will facilitate the identification of already existing data, as well as gaps, in terms of the data required for monitoring progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Identifying those gaps will also enable targeted interventions for national capacity-building so that countries will be better equipped to generate data for monitoring progress towards disability inclusion, with a view to reviewing and following up on the commitments of the 2030 Agenda.

42. Much has been discussed about the data revolution and how it can contribute to the monitoring and implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Disability inclusion can gain from a wider and innovative perspective on monitoring and from the role that these innovative technologies can play in implementing disability inclusion and therefore implementing development outcomes. Various sources of evidence should be explored to guide the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for persons with disabilities.

43. A few targets of the Sustainable Development Goals focus on accessibility, in particular, schools sensitive to persons with disabilities, accessible transport and accessible green and public spaces. Apart from data disaggregated by disability, monitoring and evaluation of accessibility will be needed to implement the 2030 Agenda. International Organization for Standardization (ISO) accessibility standards exist for buildings and for web content but have yet to be established for many key environments such as transportation, educational and health facilities. In addition, internationally comparable measures of accessibility for both physical and virtual environments have yet to be developed. The lack of standards and measures prevents internationally comparable monitoring of accessibility by countries and the review and follow-up of targets of the Sustainable Development Goals related to accessibility.

44. Some countries have produced their own accessibility guidelines, but accessibility assessments are still seldom conducted at the national level. In the context of the data revolution initiative, the exploration of unconventional sources of

[9] "Developing an indicator framework for the post-2015 development agenda", presentation made by the Statistics Division of the Secretariat at the eighth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, June 2015.

evidence on accessibility may be useful. Internet and mobile applications crowdsourcing information on accessibility of places open to the public already exist. The data collected by these applications could be used to inform about accessibility and, as the mapping of accessibility places becomes more comprehensive, to produce measures for accessibility for neighbourhoods, cities, countries and the entire world. Regular use of such sources of evidence may benefit from partnerships between national authorities and the developers of such applications.

45. The effectiveness and utility of disability data and statistics rely on the existence of a political linkage. Significant support needs to be provided to government officials to ensure that they can interpret existing data on disability and input the resulting evidence into decision-making processes and programme development. In addition, impact evaluation studies can contribute to the analysis of evidence and assist policymakers in designing new policies and deciding to scale up, refine or discontinue existing policies. There are many well-established methodologies for evaluating the impact of policy, but their use in assessing disability policies is still limited. Countries and international agencies should regularly conduct impact evaluation studies on policies and programmes aimed at promoting disability inclusion.

46. Several reports are expected to assess the progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals for persons with disabilities: the Global Sustainable Development Report, the report of the Secretary-General on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and a United Nations flagship report on the status of disability in development, to be published in 2018 pursuant to General Assembly resolution 69/142. In addition, several indicators are likely to provide a wealth of information on the situations of persons with disabilities vis-à-vis the Sustainable Development Goals in the coming years: the Sustainable Development Goal indicators, the indicators of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the indicators to be developed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to monitor the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities within the context of the Sustainable Development Goals. These initiatives may benefit from forms of coordination and collaboration such as strengthening existing mechanisms to coordinate the disability perspective in these processes and to review progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals for persons with disabilities.

B. Addressing inequality through accessibility

47. As reiterated in the high-level meeting, accessibility is a fundamental human right and a precondition to the realization of other basic human rights for persons with disabilities. This was reaffirmed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which specifically identifies accessibility and disability inclusion in urban design and human settlements. Forms of inclusion, including accessibility, are explicitly mentioned in the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 11, in relation to inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities.

48. More than half of all persons with disabilities worldwide live in towns and cities. It is estimated that by 2030 this number will increase to between 750 million

and 1 billion.[10] With such growth in urbanization, cities are at the epicentre of global sustainable development. If designed well, urban development offers significant opportunities for increased participation and inclusion for persons with disabilities. Accessibility to physical, built and virtual environments, services and facilities is essential to enable persons with disabilities to benefit effectively and equally from economic and social gains. Accessibility thus serves to enable persons with disabilities to participate in political, economic, social, cultural and civic spheres. Conversely, accessibility limitations represent devastating barriers to the participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of society and development. Accessibility in urban development therefore forms an integral part of any sustainable development agenda that aims to be inclusive and leave no one behind. In a practical sense, this means principles of universal design need to be adopted and applied by all agents and stakeholders in both the public and private sectors and that social inclusion, in all its forms, should be a central consideration of urban developers.

49. Voluntary ad hoc commitments are not sufficient to remove barriers to the built and virtual environments. Strong commitment, in concrete terms, including predictable resource allocation, to the implementation of "design-for-all" approaches, as well as systematic engagement and consultation with organizations of persons with disabilities, is required to ensure disability-inclusive urbanization.

50. Accessibility should not be viewed as a goal reserved for wealthier communities. Studies have indicated that accessible and disability-inclusive urban development can be realized everywhere at little cost to urban planning and infrastructure.[11] In view of Sustainable Development Goal 10, to reduce inequality within and among countries, technological and information transfers from one country to another, as well as within nations, could be better promoted and managed to enable breakthroughs in research and inclusion gains to reach those most excluded and marginalized. International cooperation, the provision of technical assistance and intellectual property concessions could be useful in this regard.

51. Moving forward, the design and planning of sustainable built environments will require a holistic and people-centred approach that informs, engages and involves persons with disabilities and their organizations in all aspects of urban development in a systematic way. The New Urban Agenda, which will be adopted at Habitat III in October 2016, has the potential to guide this transformation, by removing physical and virtual barriers to participation.

C. Inclusion though integrated approaches to policymaking

52. To effectively mainstream disability and ensure that no one is left behind in national development efforts, the formulation and application of all development policies and programmes at the national level would benefit from reviews from a disability perspective. It is essential that national laws and policies are non-discriminatory and inclusive in their scope, as well as in their application, and

[10] It is estimated that 15-20 per cent of urban dwellers are persons with disabilities (World Health Organization and World Bank, *World Report on Disability* (World Health Organization, Geneva, 2011); and United Nations Population Fund, "Urbanization", available from www.unfpa.org/urbanization (accessed on 27 July 2016)).

[11] World Health Organization and World Bank, World Report on Disability (World Health Organization, Geneva, 2011).

that they are responsive to the needs and perspectives of persons with disabilities. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as a development instrument, should be used as a guide in this regard. Effective mainstreaming of disability requires more than just consultation with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. It requires their active participation.

53. While a great deal of traction has been gained in developing and providing targeted support for groups of persons with disabilities, including in international development cooperation activities, effective mainstreaming of disability in social policies and programmes remains a challenge in most countries. In instances where such mainstreaming has been attempted, persons with disabilities are sometimes lumped together with other marginalized groups or treated as an "add-on" group. Such efforts therefore fail to effectively take into consideration the diversity of perspectives of persons with disabilities and result in inadequate responses to their needs.

54. Similar issues emerge in relation to addressing intersectionalities among issues affecting persons with disabilities and other marginalized and/or disadvantaged groups. For example, challenges persist in terms of realizing gender perspectives in the context of work that focuses on the empowerment of persons with disabilities. The same can be said of efforts to mainstream disability perspectives in work to advance gender equality. Responding to these intersectionalities and the diversity of needs and perspectives of persons with disabilities requires new forms of collaboration, coordination and sharing of expertise beyond traditional spheres. Existing mechanisms to implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other international human rights instruments, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, need to be strengthened and aligned with mainstream development policies and programmes, including those that are designed or will be designed for the realization of the 2030 Agenda.

55. The 2030 Agenda calls for an integrated approach to disability and development. Addressing the development needs and interests of persons with disabilities will gain from recognizing the diversity of needs and perspectives of persons with disabilities are interdependent. Without access to education or skills training, the Sustainable Development Goals related to employment will be difficult to realize. Without employment and accessible services, the Sustainable Development Goals on poverty and inequality are difficult to fulfil. The realization of the Sustainable Development Goals for persons with disabilities is also, for the most part, dependent on the realization of development goals for other groups of persons. Since the rights, opportunities and outcomes for persons with disabilities and other groups are interdependent, disability-responsive measures should not be pursued in isolation or wholly in parallel to existing policies and mechanisms.

56. In practice, this means that substantive reforms to existing procedures and institutional structures are necessary to ensure that disability-responsive decision-making and programming take place in all relevant spheres. Gains would flow from the effective integration of the rights and perspectives of persons with disabilities in the planning, budgeting and implementation programmes of all line ministries and institutions, not just those traditionally tasked with addressing disability issues.

57. Efforts to establish and strengthen the roles of national disability institutions to support mainstreaming of disability are positive steps towards the development and

integration of disability-responsive government policies and programming. Significant regional support to strengthen such national mechanisms has also offered a number of key lessons to be learned in this regard. Judging from those experiences and the varying levels of success among national disability institutions, it is clear that the mere existence of coordination bodies to ensure systematic dialogue between line ministries and stakeholders is essential, but is not an end in itself. Effective mainstreaming of disability relies on direct collaborative partnerships between disability experts and sectoral or programme specialists and the ultimate responsibility and accountability for mainstreaming the rights and perspectives of persons with disabilities need to remain within the line ministries. Operationalization of the 2030 Agenda for persons with disabilities will require extensive collaboration and coordination of disability-inclusive measures and the integration of those measures into existing and new mainstream policies and programmes.

D. Strengthening development outcomes for persons with disabilities through intersectoral, multidimensional approaches

58. Development outcomes are compromised by situations of persistent inequality and the failure to uphold the rights of persons with disabilities. Recognizing this, the 2030 Agenda presents sustainable development and peace as intrinsically linked and mutually reinforcing. It therefore calls for a sharing of knowledge, capacities and resources from across the development, humanitarian and peace and security spheres. Inclusive development depends on the existence of peaceful societies and communities; and peace depends on inclusivity and sustainable development. The cross-sectionalities among disability human rights, other issues that guide humanitarian action, disaster risk reduction and responses, and development need to be further explored and pursued with a view to breaking down silos (i.e., obstacles to interaction) in order to strengthen the inclusion of persons with disabilities. Recognizing the need to move towards risk-informed development, humanitarian assistance and development can no longer be conceptualized as a transitional process or as separate spheres of work.

59. Persons with disabilities face heightened risks during emergency situations and humanitarian crises. In such situations, including protracted displacement, refugees and internationally displaced persons with disabilities face compound barriers to accessing basic services, including education, health care and employment. Humanitarian assistance alone is inadequately resourced and does not have the capacity to effectively address or sustainably respond to the developmental needs of persons with disabilities, particularly in the context of protracted crises. Inclusive development requires that persons with disabilities benefit from longer-term development investments during times of crises, particularly protracted crises, and during the transitional period leading to recovery. To date, however, development and humanitarian actors have largely failed to systematically collaborate in their responses to the humanitarian and developmental needs of persons with disabilities.

60. It has been recognized that disability inclusion in all stages of crises prevention, risk mitigation and responses is critical to the creation of resilient,

inclusive and equitable societies. Several studies[12] have shown that including the needs and voices of persons with disabilities at each of these stages can significantly reduce their vulnerability and increase the effectiveness of response and recovery efforts. However, despite increasing worldwide attention to the need for more inclusive approaches to emergency mitigation and responses, including a greater focus on disaster risk reduction as opposed to mere response mechanisms, most actors fail to adequately plan for — or include — persons with disabilities in their policies and programmes. This causes severe inequities in access to immediate responses, in addition to having an impact on longer-term recovery resources, placing persons with disabilities further behind on the path towards development. The integration of disability perspectives in all phases of emergency and humanitarian action directly affects broader inclusion and integration in society.

61. Development actors can bring experience and strategies to support responses to humanitarian needs through ongoing support for human development and capacity-building during times of protracted crises, particularly in situations calling for support for the integration of displaced persons in societies and communities, as well as in efforts to support recovery from crises. Relief assistance could be improved through responses that address both the immediate needs of communities and the longer-term development needs. Infrastructure development and related services that incorporate the principles of universal design are one example of important development investments for disability inclusion, in host communities and in reconstruction efforts. The challenge faced by the international community, including the United Nations system, is to be able to translate these concepts into coordinated and mutually reinforcing approaches on the ground while retaining flexibility to respond to changing demands. A coherent approach linking development actors with emergency and humanitarian assistance providers could be better pursued with a focus on supporting a continual path towards inclusive social and economic development for persons with disabilities.

62. A number of existing structures could be used to support the operationalization of these multidimensional links. Within the United Nations system alone, a number of inter-agency mechanisms and systems operating as part of the "One United Nations" initiative already exist to support the breaking down of silos between areas of focus and thematic fields of work. The Inter-Agency Support Group on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities are two such technical and operational mechanisms that could take action to identify links and support better collaboration and coordination in the various areas of work. United Nations country teams also provide an entry point for strengthening grass-roots coherence at the operational level in the fields of development, human rights and peace and security. United Nations country teams that have already begun coordinating the mainstreaming of the rights, perspectives and well-being of persons with disabilities in their work are making progress, with a number of activities of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework already reflecting efforts at mainstreaming disability. However such progress and efforts are largely taking place on an ad hoc basis. In order to systematize mainstreaming and coordinated

[12] See, for example, United States, Department of Education, *Emergency Management Research and People with Disabilities: A Resource Guide* (Washington, D.C., 2008); and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *World Disasters Report 2007: Focus on Discrimination* (2007).

approaches, the gap in the capacities of country-level agencies needs to be addressed. Effectively, this requires investment in capacity-building, coordination and systematic reporting of United Nations country teams on mainstreaming disability and other relevant efforts.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

63. The inclusion of the rights and perspectives of persons with disabilities has gained momentum at the global level, particularly through the adoption the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. New multi-stakeholder networks that go beyond traditional mandates and spheres of work are also emerging. Further, there has been a consistent call for stronger and more ambitious action by all stakeholders to meaningfully engage persons with disabilities in all decision-making and planning processes.

64. The present report has reviewed the recent developments in ongoing intergovernmental processes and assessed opportunities for building more inclusive societies. In this context, the role of the United Nations in taking an integrated approach to strengthen its three pillars of peace and security, humanitarian assistance, and development has been discussed.

65. While considerable progress has been made, mainstreaming of disability remains a global challenge. Further efforts are needed to strengthen the normative and operational links and to effectively integrate mainstreaming of disability in development policies and programmes. The present report has explored the role of accessibility and integrated institutional approaches to bridging some of the present gaps in inclusive development and removing the barriers.

66. Recognizing the scale and impact of protracted humanitarian crises on the economic and social outcomes for persons with disabilities, the international community should take all possible measures to systematically incorporate disability-specific goals in all spheres of work and to break down traditional silos in order to enhance cooperation and collaboration for inclusion.

67. There continue to be challenges to making the monitoring, review, follow-up and implementation of the 2030 Agenda disability-inclusive. There is an urgent need to address the consistent lack of monitoring and evaluation tools that would enable managers, government officials and others to translate broad statements on the inclusion of disability issues into concrete action.

68. A significant challenge for effectively monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for persons with disabilities is the lack of high-quality data that can be used to make comparisons between countries over time in areas of critical importance to the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities such as education, employment, health and participation in decision-making. Such data are required to provide viable baselines and measure progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals for persons with disabilities.

69. Studies on the impact of policies and programmes promoting disability inclusion are scarce. More evaluations, based on solid evidence, of the impact of policies and programmes promoting disability inclusion will be needed to guide the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for persons with disabilities.

70. The follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and other processes[13] are expected to reflect on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals for persons with disabilities. In order to promote collaboration and avoid duplication, it may be beneficial to consider building on existing mechanisms to ensure a platform that coordinates the different assessments of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals for persons with disabilities in these respective processes.

71. The General Assembly may wish to consider the following specific actions to promote the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of disability-inclusive Sustainable Development Goals:

(a) Encourage Member States and other stakeholders to take immediate action to strengthen laws, policies and programmes concerning national social and economic development and to take a responsive and integrated approach to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals for and with persons with disabilities;

(b) Encourage Members States, the United Nations system and relevant stakeholders to strengthen coordination in the humanitarian, disaster and development spheres so as to strengthen resilience, better mitigate risks and support pathways towards recovery and development, including during protracted crises, for persons with disabilities;

(c) Encourage Member States, international development institutions and other stakeholders, including the private sector, to promote accessibility and to apply principles of universal design in all aspects of urban development, including the planning, design and construction of physical and virtual environments, public spaces, transportation and public services;

(d) Encourage Member States to address data gaps and prioritize the collection, reporting, use and analysis of disability data with a view to urgently establishing a baseline for monitoring progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals for persons with disabilities. Significant increased investments in national statistical offices are needed, including:

(i) Increase capacity-building, as part of the data revolution;[14]

(ii) Substantially increase resources devoted to the production of a broad range of disability statistics, so as to make possible the monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals for persons with disabilities;

(e) Urge Member States, the United Nations system, academic institutions and other stakeholders to take measures to promote, as well as to build countries' capacity for, the conducting of studies to evaluate the impact of policies and programmes promoting disability inclusion in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and measures to build the capacity of policymakers to interpret and use evidence of impact evaluation studies.

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[13] Such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and several reports submitted to the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the General Assembly.

[14] Independent Expert Advisory Group on the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development, "A world that counts: mobilising the data revolution for sustainable development", November 2014.